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ABSTRACT

Government policies of developing nations to stimulate economic development do not necessarily improve the living conditions of their citizens, most of whom are economically poor and politically powerless. A major criticism of attempts by most Western and national governments to promote development is that they serve only the elite. This study of the Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad (KSSP) discusses the limitations and potential of a popular education movement in India. The KSSP, which translates into "Kerala Science Literature Society," was begun in 1962 to make scientific knowledge available to the people in the language of the state. Growth in membership has been accompanied by an increasing involvement with left-wing political activists. Dilemmas facing the KSSP are conflicts between Marxist and middle-class leadership over definition of "the people" and "science" and the relationship of science to religion and to the state. Lessons that can be learned from the KSSP movement demonstrate: the importance of an independent, sufficient financial base; leadership dedication to original objectives; a large "critical mass" of volunteers; less organizational hierarchy; recruitment of the elite; alliance with other organizations; and utilization of the arts as information disseminators. Despite its problems, the KSSP provides an innovative, indigenous model for mass educational reform. (LMI)

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DILEMMAS OF A SUCCESSFUL PEOPLE'S EDUCATION MOVEMENT IN INDIA

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DILEMMAS OF A SUCCESSFUL PEOPLE'S EDUCATION MOVEMENT IN INDIA*

Mathew Zachariah

Economically poor and politically powerless people constitute the vast majority in most of the nations of Asia, Africa and Latin America. Although the governments of these nations are - or appear to be - committed to development, their policies and actions to promote development mainly through stimulating growth in certain sectors of the economy do not necessarily improve the living standards of most poor people and, indeed, create large groups of victims of development. The attempts of various Western governments, international agencies, national governments and non-governmental organizations to promote development in Asia, Africa and Latin America in the four decades following the conclusion of World War II and their acknowledged failure to do so in large measure have resulted in vigorous criticisms of the motives, approaches and actions of these institutions.

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The most persistent and valid criticism of the attempt by most Western as well as national governments to promote development is that it ignores, except in rhetorical statements, the genuine aspirations of poor and powerless people. Three other major criticisms follow: National and international elites use the state to put in place policies that promote their own class interests prompting the legitimate question: development for whom? These elites do not understand the real problems people face and the contextual rationality that motivates such people to think and act in the ways they do. The elites do not value the knowledge and experience of the people on whom they impose their policies for development.

The phrase "development from below" acknowledges the validity of these criticisms and argues for a perspective that acknowledges (a) the importance of confrontation and conflict in any genuine development process and (b) the necessity to make genuine, deliberate attempts to improve the living standards of poor people, attempts that cannot be too hasty or too slow.[1]

It is in this context that I wish to present my preliminary findings about the Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad (KSSP). In the course of this discussion, I hope to deepen my own understanding of the processes of conscientization in India and Canada, explore the limits and possibilities of anti-hegemonic popular education and emphasize the importance of disciplined optimism in the face of the depressing state of the world today. But first, it is necessary to clarify four key terms.

CLARIFICATION OF TERMS

Popular Education

Education is a life-long process. It is a process in which well-initiated members of a culture transmit to less well-initiated members the widely accepted values, attitudes, knowledge, beliefs and behaviours of that culture. Such transmission of knowledge, folkways and mores begin at birth and much of it occurs in the family for youngsters in the form of primary socialization. Individuals who are subjected to this socialization respond to it, in most instances, by accepting and internalizing the knowledge, folkways, mores etc. and by modifying their behaviour in accordance with it. This is, mostly, informal education. Where compulsory schooling exists or where schooling is widely available, the venue for the next - i.e., secondary - socialization becomes classrooms and school corridors. This is, mostly, formal education. In addition to transmitting the cultural heritage, schools in the past century have been expected to help transform people and their institutions so that human life in society could be made better.

There are many empirical sources from which we discern the transformative potential of education; I shall mention four. First, we recognize that when people are being socialized, they do not remain inert. They react to the socialization they undergo, picking and choosing among values, attitudes and mores. Second, when schooling becomes a mass phenomenon, children and youth are exposed to a great many individual adults, mainly teachers, whose values and mores are different from the values and mores of the adults in their primary

group. Structural functionalists emphasize these two sources and their cumulative, gradual impact as a way of accommodating social change. The third source recognizes that teachers and other workers in institutions of formal education, as a group, have interests that often conflict with the interests of the elites in whose service they are expected, for the most part, to toil. These educational workers often oppose - albeit indirectly most of the time - the agenda of the ruling elites. This is a position many conflict theorists espouse. The fourth position is also a conflict theory position. Adults in the so-called lower classes or castes are often acutely aware of the oppressive elements in the social structure they help maintain. While these adults do not publicly articulate their hostility, they do express them in intimate circles which their children and adult peers internalize.

Popular education attempts, for the most part, to harness the transformative potential of education. While it is not informal or formal education, popular education is not entirely non-formal education either. Popular education is often a counter-movement and a counter-strategy to the cooptive, palliative characteristics of state-sponsored non-formal education.

Science

Rather than discuss the many meanings of "science", I shall make one point about science in terms of the two Sanskrit words associated with it. 'Sastram' captures an essential, universal feature of science: at a particular point in time and space, science is systematically organized knowledge, tested logically or empirically. It is formally codified and capable of oral or written transmission. If the word

'sastram' refers to the closed nature of scientific knowledge at a particular period, the work 'vijnan', knowledge about the material world, calls attention to the openness of science to correction on the basis of experimentation and predictions that do or do not come true. ('Vijnan' may be contrasted to 'jnan', spiritual knowledge which in its highest form is perfect.) We find both terms used in connection with people's science movements in India; for example, Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad and Marathi Vignan Parishad in the state of Maharashtra.

KSSP's use of the term "science" in its day-to-day work and publications is similar to the notion of 'vijnan' as defined above. What KSSP hopes to develop and promote is critical consciousness of a particular type among the masses of people. One of the influential persons I interviewed acknowledged that KSSP's main work is conscientization; the word 'sastram' (or science) was deliberately chosen to take advantage of the fact that most people in India have positive attitudes towards it. Hence, my choice of the phrase "people's education movement" in place of "people's science movements" (which is the popular phrase in India) calls attention to the mainly educative role of KSSP and other similar movements.[2]

People

All people's education movements are social movements. A social movement is one form of collective behaviour in which large numbers of people are organized to support or bring about or resist change. Theodorson and Achilles point out that, "participation in a social movement is for most people only informal and indirect. Usually large numbers of sympathizers identify and support the movement and its

program without joining any formal organization associated with the movement".[3]

If there can be no social movement without people, what is the significance of the prefix "People's"? For Marxists, the term has a specific meaning when used in phrases such as "People's Republic of China". The people are the peasants, workers and other oppressed classes who have overthrown, or are in the process of overthrowing, the oppressors. Except for short term tactical reasons, collaboration with members of other classes (unless they are true converts) is treasonous, at least to orthodox Marxists.

For many non-Marxists, the very term "people's" is a repudiation of important aspects of Marxist analysis and prediction.[4] The term encompasses individuals from many classes who do not wish to wait for the elusive morning after the workers and peasants have overthrown the feudal and bourgeois overlords to bring about social change. They wish to conscientize people to recognize their rights as well as responsibilities and to put pressure on the State to implement policies that will improve the lives of ordinary citizens. The tension between these two different approaches is evident in many people's movements.

Development

Marxists and non-Marxists who participate in people's movements in India - a political democracy with significant feudal traditions functioning within a capitalist economic framework - tend to agree about what development ought to be. Development must promote economic growth, but not at any cost. The encouragement of economic growth must take account of and be restrained by three equally important other

objectives: protection of the environment and consideration of the ecological impact of industrialization and commercialization; fair and equitable distribution as well as redistribution of goods and services to enable poorer people to get a fairer share of society's wealth and to participate fully in the economy; creation of opportunities for everyone to increasingly participate in the political, artistic and other activities of society. If a polity attempts to promote economic growth, environmental protection, redistribution and participation, each of these objectives will affect the others. Economic growth, for example, will not become an end in itself. In this context, the very term "development" becomes inadequate, indeed, unsatisfactory because development, as often practiced, has been a process of forced capitalist accumulation, resulting in the poor becoming poorer. Terms such as "cultural reconstruction" and "liberation" attempt to overcome the patronizing connotation of words like "development" and "modernization".[5] Whether economic growth or redistribution or participation is the prime mover for social progress is a continuously controversial issue. If people's movements in India emphasize participation, redistribution and ecological sensitivity, state planners and administrators, especially in the past decade, have given priority to economic growth. Then people's movements, become an oppositional force, to compel the State to change course in the short run and to change the nature of the state itself in the long run.

KERALA IN INDIA

Kerala, as a state within the Union - i.e., the federation - of India came into being on November 1, 1956 as a result of the States Reorganization Act (1956) (see p. 51). This Act brought together almost all the people who spoke one language and lived in contiguous areas. Kerala was created out of the integration of parts of the Province of Madras and the princely state of Travancore in the south to administrative units to its north: the princely state of Cochin, the Malabar District of the erstwhile Madras Province and the Kasargode District of the erstwhile princely state of Mysore. The language of the people of Kerala is Malayalam and, therefore, the people are identified as Malayalis.

Kerala is located in the southwestern corner of India. Somewhat like Chile in South America, it is a narrow state with some 576 kilometres of coastline hugging the Arabian sea, 30 kilometres in breadth at southern and northern extremities and 120 kilometres wide at its centre (see p. 52). Kerala's neighbours are Tamil Nadu in the southeast and Karnataka in the north and northeast. Its area of 39,000 square kilometres makes it only the sixth largest of 22 states in the Union, ahead of Sikkim, Tripura, Nagaland, Manipur and Meghalaya. (It is larger than every one of the nine Union Territories i.e., areas directly administered by the Central Government, except Arunachal Pradesh.) Although Kerala occupies only a little over 1 per cent of India's land area, its more than 25 million people, according to the 1981 Census of India, is the twelfth largest of all the states and Union

Territories. Whereas the average population density per km^2 for India is 261, in Kerala it is 655, the highest in the country.

Kerala has three broad distinct topographies. The Western Ghats are the highlands of Kerala. Dense forests - broken by the sources of several rivers - contain well-known varieties of timber such as teak, blackwood, ebony softwood and rosewood. Forests occupy a quarter of the state's area. The height of these areas range from about 1000 to 2700 metres. In the lower elevations of the highlands, one can see large tea, rubber and cardamom plantations.

The midlands is made up of undulating country dotted with bluegreen lakes, lagoons and myrid rivers, their tributaries and canals. The major crops of the regions are coconuts, bananas, sugarcane, cashewnuts, several types of vegetables and almost all the well-known spices such as pepper and ginger. Rice and tapioca are important food crops grown in this region.

Tall coconut palms, often bordering paddy fields, nod gently in the breeze along the seashore of the state. The sandy soil of the lowlands is not very hospitable to the growth of luxurious vegetation; yet, the beaches teem with fisherfolk who haul in the bounty of the Arabian sea.

Kerala gets heavy rains in two main seasons of June to August and December-January.

Some of the vital statistics of Kerala from the 1981 Census of India, official Union and state publications are relevant to the topic of this paper.

Hindus account for 82.6, Muslim for 11.4 and Christian for 2.4 per cent of the population of India. In Kerala, however, Hindus constitute

61 per cent, Christians 21 per cent and Muslims 18 per cent of the population. The Syrian Christians of Kerala claim to have been Christians since 52 A.D. when St. Thomas, an apostle of Christ, is said to have come to Kerala and converted several highcaste Hindus to Christianity. Trade and other contacts between Kerala and West Asia ('the Middle East') had existed long before the commencement of the Christian era.

There were 1,032 females per 1,000 males in Kerala, the only state where females exceed males. (One hypothesis claims that the absence of female infanticide accounts for this unique feature.) Whereas the rate of literacy for India is 36.2, in Kerala it is 70.4, the highest rate for any state in the entire country. Whereas only 25 percent of India's female population is literate, almost 66 per cent females in Kerala can read and write, a statistic that leaves every other administrative area far behind. Basically, Kerala is an agricultural state; 81 per cent of the state's population is classified as rural. Only 5 per cent of the state's area is classified as urban, well below 10 states and two Union Territories, namely, Delhi and Chandigarh. Only 27 per cent of Kerala's population was considered as participating in the wage sector of the economy. In 1983, only approximately 300,000 persons in Kerala were in factory employment. Kerala - with some 3000 registered companies - ranked well behind Maharashtra, West Bengal, Delhi, Tamil Nadu, Gujerat, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Punjab in the total number of government and non-government companies. There were only 26,500 small-scale industrial units in Kerala in 1984, more than only in Delhi, Orissa, Jammu and Kashmur, Himachal Pradesh and Assam.

Per capita income in Kerala is estimated at Rupees 2287 in 1985-86; it was below the national average of Rs. 2586 and placed Kerala in the bottom half of all the states in India.[6]

Yet, there is a significant anomaly about Kerala which defies the conventional wisdom about development. As we have already seen, Kerala's economic development - measured in conventional terms such as industrialization and commercial trade - is very much behind that of, say, Maharashtra or Punjab. Yet, Kerala is very advanced in the provision of modern services, as the statistics below indicate.

Only 19 per cent of Kerala's highly literate population are classified as urban. As of 1984-85, rural electrification had reached 1,268 (100 per cent) of Kerala's villages. All the villages of Kerala were connected with all-weather roads. Kerala had post offices in every village - except two - as of 1986 and led all the other states, according to the Indian Postal Service.[7] Kerala has 4.28 telephones per square km. compared to 1,05 for the country; the average number of telephones per thousand in Kerala is 6.55 against an all-India average of 5.06.[8] Malayalis are avid newspaper and magazine readers. Robin Jeffrey points out: "The ratio of Malayalam dailies to population in 1981 was roughly one copy for every 19 speakers of the language. The nearest rival was Gujerati (1:29) while the all-India ratio . . . was about 1:43".[9] Kerala's rate of growth of population decreased for the first time in the decade of 1971-81; it was 19.24 per cent in contrast to 25 per cent for India.[10] In 1987, Kerala achieved the reduction in population growth rate that had been set for it as a target for the year 2000.[11] The age at marriage is the highest in Kerala, especially for females. Life expectancy in Kerala in 1980-81 was 64.71 for males and

69.01 for females for a combined average of 66.75. The respective figures for India in 1980-81 were 50.9 (males), 50.0 (females) and 50.5 (all). Females living longer than males is a feature noticed more often in "developed" countries than in "developing" countries.[12] Kerala's 1985 infant mortality rate of 32 per 1000 live birth is the lowest in India and compares favourably with some of the "developed" countries. Maternal mortality rate for Kerala is below 2 per 1000 deliveries in contrast to the Indian average of 45. For every 1000 persons, there is almost one (0.07) medical institution in Kerala. Protected water supply is available to over 70 per cent of the urban and 58 per cent of the rural population. People use financial institutions (such as banks) extensively indicating a high degree of monetisation of the economy.

Kerala was the first state or province within a federation anywhere in the world that in free elections voted for a communist government; this occurred in 1957. (Some towns in Italy had elected communist municipal councils earlier.)

How may we account for Kerala's unique and anomalous position which has resulted in some discussion of a "Kerala model of development." Scholars have advanced several hypotheses to explain it. I shall simply mention them without discussion here. (1) The maharajahs of the princely states of Travancore and Cochin tended to be enlightened men who provided many social services - particularly opportunities for schooling - for the people which provided a foundation for future development. They were able to foster a latently present love of knowledge among the people embodied in their worship of Saraswati, the goddess of learning. (2) The Western missionaries who laboured in Kerala established many schools, hospitals, orphanages etc.

for poor people which received the support of the many - certainly not all - indigenous Christians and others. (3) Hindu leaders - for example, Sri Narayana Guru - partly in reaction to the challenge posed by Christian missionaries initiated reform movements to curb superstition and to change the worst excesses of caste practices such as untouchability. (4) The nationalist movement against British imperialism developed in the people a consciousness of their dignity and rights and sharpened the skills of many leaders in organizing people's movements. (5) From the mid-1930's a strong socialist and trade union movement developed in Kerala that eventually became a part of the Communist Party of India; this movement helped increase the militancy level of ordinary people. (6) The Sahitya Pravarthaka Sahakarana Sankham (the Literary Workers' Cooperative Society) founded by writers in 1945 had a strong "progressive" (i.e., left-wing) character that supported the aspirations of poor and powerless people against landlords and capitalists. (7) Hundreds of thousands of skilled, literate Malayalis who went to other parts of India and other parts of the world (especially West Asia) returned with money and ideas; they demanded and provided many services, rather than invest in wealth-producing industries. (8) One major reason for their hesitation to establish industries was the extreme militancy of the working people.

In my view, all of these hypotheses are partially valid. Which of them is stronger than others, I have not been able to decide. What is important to us here is that these eight hypotheses also help explain KSSP's achievements and limitations.

KSSP: A BRIEF ACCOUNT

Historical Background

The Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishat celebrated its 25th anniversary in 1987-88. The name, KSSP, can be translated as "Kerala Science Literature Society". Although there were precursory developments from 1957, KSSP dates its origin to 1962 when a small group of intellectuals began an informal effort to make scientific knowledge available to Malayalis through books and periodicals written in Malayalam, the language of the state. In the 1960's and early 1970's KSSP's attempts to promote scientific thinking and a scientific attitude among the people equated science with subject matter, namely, the physical and the biological sciences. One of the earliest plans, abandoned later, of this group was to translate and publish Charles Darwin's The Origin of Species. The hope was that by translating foreign scientific books and publishing articles and books in Malayalam about physical as well as biological sciences that would appeal to non-scientists, the scientific spirit could somehow be developed in the people. This equating of science with the physical and biological sciences reflected, for the most part, the interests of active KSSP members then: they were mainly engineers and scientists, college teachers and a few people prominent in the social service field. Although, membership in the organization increased gradually, it remained a rather small organization until about 1973. In 1973, KSSP adopted the slogan "Science for Social Revolution" at its eleventh Annual Conference. That slogan signified three important changes in KSSP's approach to science. (1) Instead of equating it with certain branches of knowledge, science must be

perceived as a process or means by which human beings attempt to explore relationships between cause and effect whether in the natural or social world. (2) The process of science and the uses to which the conclusions of science and its applications (i.e. technology) are put, depend on human decisions. (3) Those human decisions are now resulting in grave social problems such as immiserisation. (In the development debate conducted in English in India, the process by which the poor becomes poorer is known as "immiserisation".) Such decisions must be changed. To do so, science must be compelled to serve the people and not just the elites who are now served by it. Since 1973, KSSP has maintained this stance, defended and indeed strengthened it. This stance increased the organization's popularity among a great many ordinary people and helped increase its membership.

There was a noticeable increase in membership in 1977. The "official" histories of KSSP do not discuss this important matter. Let us recall that 1975-77 was a dark period in the history of Indian democracy. Indira Gandhi, India's Prime Minister, had imposed Emergency Rule over the nation. During this period, there were severe restrictions on the activities of political parties. Many left-wing political activists - specifically members of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) - i.e., CPI(M) - found themselves without their usual fora. (There are three major Communist parties in India. The Communist Party of India - CPI - is the oldest, continuing Party in the country; it is often seen as closely allied with the Soviet Union. The Communist Party of India (Marxist) - CPI(M) - broke ranks with the CPI for theoretical and practical reasons, and takes a more militant stance than the CPI. The Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) - CPI(ML) -

is the smallest group and advocates the violent overthrow of the Indian State. There are also many splinter groups.) The left-wing activists turned to KSSP which continued to function during the Emergency because it was not an overtly political organization. The entrance of a large number of CPI(M) activists into the ranks of KSSP around 1976-77 had two long-lasting effects. First KSSP, almost overnight, became an organization with a large membership; that is, it achieved mass membership. Second, Marxist modes of thought began to dominate KSSP's perspectives.

Another significant increase in membership occurred in 1983, mainly as a result of the success of KSSP's street theatre program covering the entire state of Kerala. (I shall discuss this program later.)

In 1987, approximately 23,000 persons were members of KSSP in over 800 local units. Approximately 60 per cent of KSSP's active workers are teachers in Kerala's schools and colleges. Physical scientists, doctors, engineers, social scientists, workers, peasants and technicians are also to be found in KSSP's membership rolls.

KSSP's Organizational Structure

The following description of KSSP's organization is taken from a 1986 pamphlet which is one of its few English language publications.

> "At the base are the units. Above the unit level there are the regional councils and the regional committees and then there are the district councils and district committees. Members from the units and other councils are elected on a proportional basis to form the State General Council which

is responsible for all policy decisions of the organization. The General Council elects an Executive Committee and a number of programme committees for the planning and execution of activities."

KSSP'S CURRENT ACTIVITIES

The following edited description of KSSP's activities is also mostly taken from that pamphlet.

Publications

Propagation of periodicals and books meant for the popularization of science and the generation of scientific outlook among all sections of the people, is considered to be an important organizational task. Following are the periodicals published by the KSSP.

1. Eureka: Children's Science Monthly for primary school children
2. Sastrakeralam: Science Monthly for High School students
3. Sastragathy: Science Monthly for adults
4. Parishad Vartha: Monthly bulletin for the members of KSSP.

Other publications include books for children of different age groups, for grown-ups etc. Print runs of book vary from 2,000 to 15,000. Till now KSSP has bought out about 500 titles. The main distribution channel for the

books are the units. Commission allowed on books is given to the units and they utilize it for meeting their expenses.

Nonformal Education

The nonformal education activities of KSSP covers a wide spectrum. Some of the important ones are listed below:

1. Science Campaigns: A number of classes on chosen topics are conducted from time to time. Classes are conducted not only among Parishat workers but also among the general public. Co-operation from teachers' organizations, village libraries, socio-political groups etc. have helped KSSP a great deal in carrying out this programme. "Nature, Science and Society" classes of 1975, "Resources of Kerala" classes of 1976, "Cheated Consumer" classes of 1982, "The World We Live In" of 1985 were some of the most successful campaigns of this sort. Each time the total number of classes varied from 10 to 15 thousand. Recently KSSP has also been campaigning against the militarization of science, multinational manipulations in the field of health, corruption in the field of education, irrational development policies etc.

2. Science Centre: The Science Centre situated at Calicut is an ambitious project of KSSP. The Centre is gradually being developed into a exhibition and study centre for school children.

3. Balavedis: To provide an exclusive forum for the children of school going age, KSSP has initiated the formation of two Balavedis - Eureka Balavedis and Sastrakeralam Balavedis. Since these are outside the realm of schools, children are encouraged to formulate and implement various programmes on their own. The themes dealt with by the Balavedis usually fall in the broader areas of concern of the KSSP itself.

Formal Education

With the full co-operation of the Kerala State Department of Education and Directorate of Public Instruction, KSSP has launched a number of activities to promote science education in schools. KSSP has contributed considerably to activate school science clubs.

Eureka Talent Tests for primary and upper primary children, Sastrakeralam Quiz for high school students and Sastragathi Talent Tests for college students have been well received in schools and colleges. The syllabi for these tests are prescribed by KSSP. Here the attempt is to make children realize the interrelationship between science (in the larger sense) and life. More than 300,000 students take part each year in these tests.

KSSP has also designed some courses for school teachers. The idea is to communicate effective methods of teaching science and other topics and thus make teaching a pleasurable experience both for the teachers and the

taught. KSSP's enquiry into corrupt practices in the field of education drew tremendous public attention as well as from various sections directly related to the field of education.

KSSP regularly alerts teachers, parents and students on the inadequacies of the present education system. A draft report on restructuring and reorienting the present education system was subjected to discussions all over Kerala. KSSP believes that the education system can be changed only when the majority starts questioning its relevance, structure and utility to society.

Environment Brigade

By reacting to quite a number of environmental issues in recent years, KSSP is attempting to generate a new concern about environment among the people. Its "Save Silent Valley" campaign was a major step towards this direction. Campaigns against industrial pollution is another major activity of the KSSP. It played a crucial role in building up powerful people's resistance against pollution of Chaliyar river by the Gwalior Rayons factory in Calicut district. Similar resistance movements are gaining strength in several other areas of the State as well. Parishat has taken up serious studies about various ecological/environmental problems in different parts of the State.

KSSP has continuously campaigned and taught against deforestation in several parts of the state. After two successful Vana Samrakshana Jathas (Forest Protection Marches) and a massive signature campaign, KSSP is presently engaged in the formation of people's resistance groups in forest areas. Results of these studies are being used for discussions and criticism among the people.

Research & Development Wing

Through the R & D Wing, KSSP is trying to develop rural oriented appropriate technological inventions in the field of environment, energy etc. With the help of the Department of Science and Technology, KSSP has recently developed a high efficiency Chulha which is now extremely popular in Kerala villages. KSSP is setting up an Integrated Rural Technology Centre to work on cooking stoves, water management, biogas etc.

Health Brigade

KSSP very strongly questions the relevance of the present day health delivery system which is curative oriented, individualized, institutionalized, highly costly and catering mostly to the needs of a wealthy minority. KSSP believes that a People's Health Movement alone can change the health delivery system in favor of the rural poor. KSSP organized health camps, classes and audio-visual campaigns on an extensive scale. KSSP has recently

started a campaigns to expose the anti-people and unethical policies of the multinational drug companies.

Street Theatre

Since 1980, the KSSP has been experimenting, with remarkable success and enthusiasm, on using art in its mass contact programmes. This has been in the form of a 37 day long march from one end of the State of the other end with a team of artists who would visit several hundred villages performing various items like street plays, songs etc, using the medium of folk arts of Kerala. This has been found quite powerful in propagating the message of KSSP. This march is called "Sastra Samskarika Jatha" ("Science Culture March"). Also this is an intense period of KSSP contact with the people. KSSP distributes publications, identifies socio-economic problems and spreads the reach of the organization to newer areas. This programme has now become an annual event.

Bharat Vigjan Kala Morcha

KSSP has been trying to spread its Janata programme to other states and regions, with the help of friendly groups. Programmes presented in Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Pondicherry, Delhi, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Maharastra were well received. Programmes were presented in their respective regional languages.

Women's Groups

For a long time, the participation of women in KSSP was rather low. Realizing this undesirable feature, conscious attempts are now being made to enlist as many women as possible into the KSSP fold.

A separate committee has therefore been set up for this purpose. While a number of subjects dealt with by the KSSP do in fact relate to problems of women, it has been felt that without their active participation it may not be possible to make an impact on this front.

The KSSP chart of p. 23 summarizes all the activities in which KSSP is interested.

All of these activities are not conducted with uniform vigour as well as enthusiasm and are not uniformly effective either in the short or the long term. Discussion of the reasons must await another occasion.

KERALA SASTHRA SAHITHYA PARISHAD

Planning

Wealth of Kerala
Policy Studies
Energy
Irrigation
Land Use
Health
Industry
Education
Agriculture

Forest Policy
Actions
Silent Valley
Social Forestry

Forest Protection

KERALA
SASTHRA
SAHITHYA
PARISHAD

SCIENCE
FOR
SOCIAL REVOLUTION

Parishad Bhavan
Pattoor,
Trivandrum 695037
Tel: 74256

Parishad Bhavan
Manvancheri Lane
Trichur 680002
Tel: 24084

Parishad Bhavan,
Kottaram Road, Calicut-6
Tel: 63919

Antipollution

Ahalya Cochin
Madurai Coats
Punalur Paper
Lakshmi Starch
Mavoor Rayons
Travancore Titanium
T K Chemicals
Vellur Newsprint
Solvent Extraction
Ossein Factory
Carbon and Chemicals
Malabar Cements
Chavara Titanium
Cochin Refinery
Mothi Chemicals

Rural Science Forum
Grama Sastram
Village Studies
Grass Root Planning
Health Camp

Rural Work

Spoken Word

Classes/Lectures
Nature, Science and Society, 1973-1200 classes
Nature, Science and Society, 1976-12000 classes
Wealth of Kerala 1977-10000
Cheated Consumer 1983-5000
Astronomy 1986-8000

Campaigns
Save Silent Valley
Save Forests
Boycott Union Carbide
Save Education

Family Health
Science in Kitchen
Anganwadi Training
Pre-primary Training

Women

Health

Camps
Parliaments
Against Harmful Drugs
Against Multinationals
Health Policy
Drug Policy

Literacy
Boycott Multinationals
World Peace
National Integration

Self Reliance

Written Word

Books
Childrens Books
Popular Books
Monographs
Encyclopedias

Pamphlets
Educative
Agitative

Periodicals
Eureka (50,000 copies)
Sastra Keralam (20,000)
Sastragathi (10,000)
Parishad Vartha
(For Members)

All India Jatha
PSM Conventions
1978, 1981, 1983, 1985

PSM

Nonformal Education

Science Week
Campaign Classes
Kala Jatha
Slide Show
Posters
Exhibitions
Film Shows

Low cost Housing
High Efficiency Chulha
Ashmoh Cement
Biogas
Solar Energy
Documentation

Research and Development

Formal Education

Eureka Talent Test
Sastra Keralam Quiz
Sastragathi Talent Test
Model Classes
Enrichment Classes
Sponsor Training
Curriculum Studies
Science Corner
Science Club
Science Forum
Education Policy
Teacher Training
Save Schools

Classes
Plays
Camps
Study Tours

Balavedi

KERALA SASTHRA SAHITHYA PARISHAD

*These numbers are significantly higher than numbers reported in KSSP's Annual Reports to members.

MAJOR DILEMMAS OF KSSP

KSSP, however, also faces major dilemmas in promoting "science for social revolution". It lists seven major objectives in its 1986-87 Workers' Diary in Malayalam. The first, and presumably most important objective, when translated, is:

> To develop in all sections of the people scientific consciousness and the scientific perspective. In this way, to build the foundation for a meaningful social revolution.

The other six objectives are:

2. To conscientizize and help organize the people and people's associations to oppose the anti-people actions of scientific and technical knowledge purveyors;
3. To line up the people against old understandings, ignorance and traditions that are obstacles to social progress;
4. To disseminate among all the people modern scientific and technological knowledge; to convert that knowledge as a powerful weapon in their hands to revolutinize society;
5. To pave the way for scientific and technical experts and ordinary people to relate to each other in a mutually fruitful way;
6. To propagandize strongly against foreign multinational monopolies and other promotors of the status quo who threaten the people's rights;
7. To seek ways and to propagate ways through which scientific and technical knowledge can be appropriately utilized to promote genuine development in our country.

In this section, I shall deal with several dilemmas KSSP faces in trying to achieve its objectives.

Who Are "The People"?

Earlier, I sketched the basis of the tension between Marxists and non-Marxists in their approach to the concept of "the people". Here, I wish to indicate the evidence of this tension in KSSP's work.

The term "the people" in English and "janam" in Malayalam occur frequently in utterances and publications by and about KSSP. For example, the title of K.P. Kannan et al's book is Towards a People's Science Movement.[13] My co-workers and I observed performances of the 1986 "Sastra Samskarika Jatha" (science culture March) in five different places. Always the last utterance, that brought down the curtain was: "The Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad will always be with the people and on the people's side."

What does the term "the people" here mean? Obviously, it means something more restricted than the grandiose phrase found in the preamble to the Constitution of India, "We, the people of India ... ." It is also more specific than the term associated with the movements Jaya Prakash Narayan the late respected social democrat led in 1974-76 in Bihar, namely, massive non-party political formations to challenge the governments of the day. In the sixth of the seven objectives of KSSP, "the people" are contrasted to multinational monopolists and those interested in maintaining the status quo ante. The literature on people's movements in India contains many phrases for "the people". Here is an incomplete list: the common people, the masses, powerless groups, depressed sections, poor classes, exploited classes, working

class, victims of development, oppressed castes, marginalized groups, peasants, rural poor, urban poor, urban unorganized sectors, subalterns, other backward classes, dalits, Harijans, ex-untouchables and so on. The people, then, are contrasted to dominant classes, dominant castes, oppressor classes, landed classes, the capitalists, the national bourgeoisie, the international capitalists, the multinationals, the rural elite, the urban elite and so on. This catalogue reveals the theoretical and conceptual problems of identifying oppressors and the people they oppress. It raises the particularly thorny issue of the relationship between caste and class in Indian society. Nevertheless, I do believe that the broad antithetical characterization of oppressor and oppressed groups in society is fundamentally correct. They are easily and clearly identifiable as groups in specific localities. My perception of the dilemma of KSSP lies in a different direction.

KSSP spearheads a mass education movement. Some call it a mass propaganda movement but I will delay discussing that controversy until we discuss 'science'. The leaders of KSSP consist almost entirely of upper middle and middle class individuals who have a social conscience, who are committed - in the short term - to working for fundamental social change through persuasion, study and agitational politics within a political democratic framework. The "rank and file" members consists mostly of persons, mainly men, employed as school teachers, clerical and low-level technical workers. It is my understanding that the percentage of manual workers and unemployed persons in KSSP is quite low. In other words, despite its slogan "Science for Social Revolution", KSSP has not been able to attract many agricultural labourers and manual labourers who stand to benefit from such a revolution. I have

been told that many unionized workers, particularly of the Kerala State Electricity Board, are quite hostile to KSSP because of the stand KSSP successfully took - in concert with many other organizations in Kerala - against building a hydro-electric dam in the Silent Valley, a rare and delicate eco-system in a remote area of northern Kerala. Thus, the class composition of KSSP creates serious problems for it to represent "the people" if we mean by that expression those groups becoming poorer as a result of development policies currently in vogue in Kerala and India. My guess is that KSSP in its actions represent issues that are important to progressive members of the middle class and people entering the middle class form the so-called lower classes and castes. I say this after acknowledging that KSSP's publications and activities in the areas of environmental protection, education, healthy and appropriate technology are aimed at arousing the apathetic poor. (It might be interesting to know the caste composition of KSSP's membership, but KSSP members rebuffed me on the grounds that KSSP does not keep statistics on and refuses to notice the caste of anyone. One of them also chided me for my "Western hangup" about caste.)

There is one telling piece of evidence that supports my contention. Careful anthropological research has shown that all human societies irrespective of their level of development have bodies of scientific knowledge and technological products that have resulted form such knowledge. Kerala's masons, artisans and agricultural workers too have such knowledge and technology. KSSP has not, except sporadically, attempted to learn, systematize, improve and teach the knowledge available among the poor. The attempt to promote "village science" in the late 1970s was a failure for several reasons: village craftsmen were

not able to articulate or teach the scientific principles guiding their work; scientists did not see much "pay off" in patiently working with craftsmen to recover these principles through careful investigation; some scientists considered "village science" regressive, . . . and so on. Hence, Krishna Kumar's assertion in the Economic and Political Weekly (1984) that the expression "'people's science' is a misnomer for it does not refer to the science people have but rather to the goal of taking the scientist's science to the people".[14] Another item of evidence is the low level of women's participation in KSSP activities which, too, reveals an Indian middle class orientation of keeping women at home to look after the kitchen and the kids. This low-level participation is in striking contrast to the heavy participation of women in "jathas" (marches) organized by trade unions and the Communist Parties. (Women do not hold proportionately representative positions of leadership even in these organizations.)

Curiosity is a universal human characteristic that knows no caste nor class nor gender. But, attempting to satisfy one's curiosity on the basis of systematic inquiry and reflection is an acquired asset or taste, e.g. it is learned. Schooling, because of its association with books and systematic instruction, is perceived to satisfy curiosity in a systematic way. KSSP too tries to do the same thing within its resource limits but in a more interesting and effective way. The children and adults KSSP attracts tend to be those who have acquired or are in the process of acquiring the taste I mentioned earlier. They tend to be from middle class or aspiring middle class families. The children of very poor and illiterate families - i.e., prospective first generation literates - will be there but they are likely to be few since most of them will be engaged

in basic survival. This observation does not, in any way, negate the remarkable work KSSP does but points to another anomaly in the actual definition of "the people".

The leadership of any progressive social movement quite often arises from progressive strata within the upper or middle classes. The dilemma, however, is this: KSSP is absolutely sincere in its goal of preparing the foundation for genuine social revolution. But it cannot do so very effectively given its mainly middle class leadership, the methods it adopts and the audiences it is usually able to reach. Its mass-contact programme, of course, is an honourable exception which does not appear to have many long-lasting effects.

What is Science?

KSSP's dilemma relating to science arises from a specific interpretation of the main ideology of KSSP.

Marx and Engels had claimed that their research had led them to discover the real and the true basis of the science of society. Marxists accept this claim. What is of interest to us is that when KSSP broadened its definition of science to include systematic analysis of social phenomena, there was an ideology, i.e., Marxism, which asserted that its perspectives and methods would yield scientific truths about society that KSSP could use. A Marxist explained to me that KSSP approaches the problematic of Indian society from the point of view of labour in opposition to that of capital. Given the large percentage of people in Kerala who identify themselves as communists or left-wing progressives and given that a significant number of them had joined KSSP, it was a natural tendency for them to accept - from 1973 but

increasingly since 1977 - the assertion that Marxism is the science of society. A content analysis undertaken of KSSP's publications provide strong evidence that it propagates the Marxist and dependency analysis of Indian society's problems. For example, here are two of KSSP's positions on Science: (1) the history of Science began when human beings began to relate to the material world. (2) Science resulted form enquiries of how work (i.e., labour) can be made more effective for society's maintenance and progress. The central importance of labour here is specifically Marxian and not accepted by many non-Marxist historians of science. I am not concerned here with establishing the rightness or wrongness of KSSP's position. I am interested in sketching the dilemma it poses for KSSP in terms of its goal.

Let us begin by accepting the Marxist insight that no science can exist independently of the social system within which it functions. While this is, of course, true of the bio-physical sciences, scientists in those fields have created certain procedures and rules by which the influence of the social system is minimized. I am referring, of course, to matters like requiring that the method of investigation and the results should by publicly available to permit replication, the rigorous logical postulate that one counter instance is sufficient to declare that a result is false, and, the test of predictability. It is these features of the scientific method that has led to one widely accepted definition of science as "organized scepticism." The "hard" scientists can also count on the fact that the matter they study does not consciously react to their experiments. We know only too well that despite this feature of the bio-physical sciences, the scientists' prejudices and world views

have all too often produced conclusions that were well accepted by peers but were proven false in another setting or at a later date.

If the influence of the social system cannot be fully eliminated in the study of non-social subjects in the biophysical sciences, what hope is there that such influence can be eliminated in the social sciences? This, among others, is one major reason that leads many people to reject Marxism's claim to be the science of society and to see it as an ideology, that is as a set of beliefs that provide a perspective through which reality is rendered intelligible for believers. (Many non-Marxists, however, are still grateful for the many brilliant insights provided by scholars in Marxist tradition.) Such rejection creates a dilemma for KSSP in that its credibility as a science-promoting organization is challenged. Several physical and social scientists I interviewed mentioned that the majority of those among them fully involved with their disciplines tend to spend no time on KSSP. They said that they appreciated KSSP's mass education programs but did not see much promotion of science in KSSP's work. Some of them suggested further - perhaps unfairly - that those scientists who do get involved in KSSP tend to be of two types: (1) scientists whose career as scientists do not appear promising, and (2) good scientists whose creative life-phase is over and are now trying to keep themselves busy with "extension work". The espousal of the Marxist ideology results in a tendency to emphasize certain topics and ignore others. For instance, the malpractices of multinational companies and their exploitation of people are often discussed in KSSP's publications. Several of KSSP's publications rightly condemn the multinational company, Union Carbide, for the tragedy that killed thousands of

people in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh on December 3, 1984 as a result of a gas leak from its factory there. But should not discussions of this tragedy also provide opportunities to emphasize the importance of safety in industry, individual and collective responsibility to promote safety in the work environment? KSSP publications do not emphasize such matters.

I was also not able to find in KSSP publications many references to the criminal wastage of national resources in inefficiently managed public sector, i.e., state-owned, companies. Similarly, KSSP focuses on institutional and structural impediments to genuine development in Indian society which is entirely appropriate. But, it does not mention the importance of individuals doing their part, however small, in promoting development. These tendencies affect KSSP's credibility.

When certain KSSP spokesmen speak, as I did hear them speak, of certain government programs or actions of politicians or policies of capitalist firms as "unscientific", what they really mean is that such actions are unfair, unjust, harmful, inconsistent and so on. The loaded and inappropriate use of the term "unscientific" shows that they are unaware - or unwilling to take sufficient account of - the "fact/value" conundrum and that they are careless about the distinction between values, science and technology. Science is not value-free, but it is less value-free than technology; the application of science to solve specific social problems cannot but occur in a value-loaded context. Moreover, scientists and technologists can honestly disagree about the benefits of a particular course of action because the action is not wholly implicit in the scientific conclusion. Thus, it is clear at least now that

the goal of protecting Silent Valley could perhaps have been achieved through other means than the ones KSSP's activists had proposed.

The credibility problem KSSP faces by politicizing problems with a Marxist bend has two aspects. First many people who would agree with the stipulative definition of development mentioned earlier would stay away or drop out after a year or two from active involvement in KSSP. Second, worried political parties would set up their own science-for-the-people organizations to counter KSSP as the recent formation of some organizations in Kerala indicate.

Must Science Oppose the Religious Quest?

The April 9, 1987 issue of the The Indian Express carried a news item that a "Quran Science Seminar" was to be held in Ernakulam on April 15 and 16. Several scholars in Asia have been recently arguing for an Islamic Science and a Hindu Science. Their arguments are complex. I cannot linger to explicate them here, other than to mention three points. (1) Science is not value-free. As a social institution, science has developed an ideology and has become a religion of sorts that opposes older, organized religions. Therefore, traditional religions have an obligation to expose and challenge the ideological pre-suppositions of science that masquerade as objective conclusions. (2) Science cannot ever hope to answer some questions that religion can. The imperial pretense that science can eventually solve or resolve all problems must be exposed as falsehood. (3) Western science is grounded in a Judeo-Christian Weltanshauung that is fundamentally inhospitable to the worldview of other religions. Therefore, other religions need to develop their own theories of science that take their

cultures and doctrines as starting points. How do these views affect KSSP?

KSSP takes the view that science began and developed in a context of human needs and actions. Thus, values have informed and shaped the way scientific enquiry has evolved. Modern Science, as we know it, is based on three a priori fundamental tenents of faith which are as follows:

1. There is order in the Universe.
2. Human beings can understand that order through systematic reflection supported by empirical observations or controlled experiments.
3. It is good to understand that order.[15]

The recognition of values such as these which underlie all scientific endeavours, the discovery that scientists cannot be completely value-free in their endeavours and the conclusion that the epistemological bases of scientific enquiry limits science from solving all of the world's ills have raised certain problems for KSSP.

In modern Europe, the growth of science was opposed tooth and nail by institutionalized Christianity which saw that the experimentation and systematic observation pursued by scientists would challenge institutional Christianity's claims to absolute truth based on revelation. Modern Science has also exposed the fallacy and harm of a great many superstitions that masquerades as religious truth. KSSP's attempt to oppose the hold of myriad superstitions on ordinary people is indeed commendable. In the process, however, it appears to take a position that invites (a) avoidable retaliation from institutionalized religions and

(b) suspicion from people who pursue the religious quest without loyalty to an institutionalized religion. Let me illustrate.

KSSP offers a course called, "Nature, Science and Society". M.P. Parameswaran, an acknowledged KSSP leader - who holds a doctorate in nuclear physics from a renowned technological institution in Moscow - explains a basic part of the course in a recent paper:

> After introducing the idea of matter, substance and object (increasing degree of concretization) as well as elements, a description of the universe, from fundamental particles to far off quazars, is given. The essential point stressed here is that everything is in motion, there is nothing without motion and that motion is the mode of existence of matter. Then two questions are raised. What is time? and what is space? After analyzing our understanding of both space and time, it is concluded that space and time are specific ways of understanding the motion of matter, that they cannot be separated from matter and its motion. There is no space or time without matter. The concept of matter-space-time continuum is thus established. Afterwards, the question of the origin of universe is analyzed and since origin means prior non-existence and since 'prior' (i.e. time) cannot exist without matter, we come to the conclusion that the question is absurd, that the UNIVERSE has always existed.[16]

I am not a specialist in the field and has only a layman's knowledge of these subjects. This formulation, however, neatly disposes off the issue of uncaused cause or a creator before creation

or, to put it in everyday language, God. But can the issue be so easily dismissed? Can a certain logical operation which establishes the primacy of matter claim to have established for all time the truth about the relationship of matter, space and time? Some of my colleagues in the field of physics tell me that whether the universe has always existed or whether it is an act of creation is still a contentious issue among specialists.[17]. For example, the KSSP explanation excludes the possibility of the "big bang" origin of the universe, which to some scientists, is evidence of the existence of God. What is more puzzling to me is that KSSP's stance prevents it from exploring the concept of a "pulsating cosmos" which has been gaining acceptance among physicists due to the acknowledged limits of the big bang theory. "The pulsating cosmos" interpretation is compatible with the ancient Hindu conception of the dance of Shiva which creates and destroys the universe periodically. KSSP, while asserting the dignity of people's indigenous culture in its publications, appears unwilling to acknowledge a part of that ancient culture that is incompatible with its narrow materialist stance. This lack of openness to new theories and data does not augur well for KSSP.

What is the dilemma KSSP faces? KSSP has chosen to oppose the very basis of religion by presenting a materialist explanation of the existence of the universe in its course. That choice represents an a priori value position. Institutionalized religions will see KSSP's position as a direct threat and will counter by saying in effect: we will accept the scientific approach as pre-eminent in certain areas of knowledge but will not submit to the view that all claims to truth must pass the test of validity prescribed on that basis. The development of Islamic Science,

Eastern science etc. is a direct result of what I consider to be the somewhat outdated view that science and religion must always be antagonists in a battle for the hearts and minds of people. Science must always oppose superstition and must continue to challenge superstition in religion. But the best scientists have respected the religious quest at its best. By religious quest I mean pursuing questions such as: Who am I? Why do I or other people suffer? Where or how can I find happiness? What is a nurturing community? What is to become of me after my death? and so on.

Whether or how to cooperate with the State?

Economic growth, environmental protection, redistribution, participation: if we examine official and authoritative Indian documents such as the Planning Commission's Five Year Plans, these are important objectives in India's reconstruction programmes. Yet, governmental and non-governmental agencies in India agree that India's remarkable achievements in the area of economic growth are far more impressive than in the areas of redistribution and participation.

In this context, let us focus on the role of the state in societal reconstruction. Let us start with a very neutral definition of the State: the political organization that has supreme civil authority, serves as the basis of government and possesses coercive power to perpetuate itself and maintain order in the community. This very abstract definition does not do justice to the complexity of the concept, but it will have to do for now. Although it has formidable coercive power, the state maintains itself for the most part, on the basis of fear of that power as well as consent, indoctrination and indifference. One

of the widely propagated views in the 1950's and 1960's was that the state in post-colonial societies would be a liberator of poorer people. In many documents, the state is often represented as a benevolent enabler, using its considerable authority to promote the common good. In countries such as India, the common good was interpreted in a Fabian socialist way: that is, as promoting the welfare of the greatest number (who were economically disadvantaged) by active state intervention in the commanding heights of all sectors of life.

There were many facets to this benevolent view of the state: development was seen as primarily an administrative or managerial problem. The state, with its increasing power, was perceived as capable of creating consensus and minimizing conflict in its pursuit of policies for economic growth and redistribution of services and resources. Proponents of this view also believed that charitable works, be they foreign or indigenous, would help hasten development. Hence, the state encouraged voluntary agencies, Indian and foreign, to undertake social service in areas such as child welfare, schooling and health care. The hope was that with the state's intervention as well as the goodwill of intermediate and national cadres and international assistance, a somewhat painless redistribution of resources among all people could be achieved. This would, it was hoped, encourage economic growth and participation, thus initiating a beneficial cycle of improvements in society.

In the early years of independent India, ordinary people had a great deal of faith in the Indian state. We can identify three main reasons for this faith: the men and women who took over the reins of state power in 1947 were persons who, under the leadership of Mahatma

Gandhi and the Indian National Congress, fought for a free India and had suffered under British imperialism. The masses in India were willing to believe that these leaders would promote policies for their welfare. Second, the leadership of the Congress Party - particularly Jawaharlal Nehru - had openly and insistently proclaimed in the decade of the 1950's their intention to establish a socialistic pattern of society in India. Third, the conventional wisdom of the times had propagated the view that a strong state was essential to counter the conservative power of the upper castes and classes which would oppose or undermine progressive legislation and policies. A strong state was also seen as a sine qua non for cultural transformation because it would be able to create a national civil society from disparate groups with divided loyalties.

Part of the faith in the state was evident in the leading role governments were expected to play in providing at least the basics of literacy and numeracy to all the children and the masses. The acquisition of such literacy - which would create skills among the people, develop confidence in them and open job opportunities for them - was often seen as pivotal in enabling people to participate in development. But, in India, as elsewhere in Asia, Africa and Latin America, the state has not been able or willing to provide sufficient opportunities to the ordinary masses of people to become literate, let alone educated. In India, despite the directive principle in the Constitution requiring the state to provide free and compulsory schooling for all children up to the age of 14, there have not been enough schools or places in schools to accommodate all eligible primary school age children, let alone other age groups. Where minimal

provisions for schooling have been made, one finds systemic discrimination against rural areas, peasants and working classes and girls. Class and caste discrimination is blatantly evident in the differences in the quality of, for instance, private urban schools and government rural schools. Thus, in the area of provision of primary schooling, the trust placed in the state was clearly not fulfilled. It would not be difficult to find other instances of non-fulfillment.

In the past three to four decades, the state in India and in other regions of Asia, Africa and Latin America has become very large and powerful. But it has not used its power, as we have just seen, to play a liberating or enabling role to justify the hopes of the masses. This has been so, say many thoughtful commentators, despite the evident sincerity and good intentions of a number of leaders. With regard to India, Rajni Kothari is blunt in his assessment:

> Today, the state is seen to have betrayed the masses, as having become the prisoner of the dominant classes and their transnational patrons and as having increasingly turned anti-people.[17]

Part of the loss of faith in the state comes from an acknowledgement, belated or otherwise, on the part of non-Marxists, of the Marxist assertion that the state in capitalist society very often functions as an instrument of the bourgeoisie to promote and facilitate capital accumulation by the bourgeoisie while maintaining social harmony. Evidence from State socialist countries such as the USSR and China clearly point to more basic problems regarding the State, apart from the emergence of new exploitative classes in those societies. Echoing Gandhi, we will have to acknowledge that processes of

bureaucratization have built into them processes of exploitation, attenuation of individual responsibility, initiative etc. irrespective of the nature of the economy and polity. Moreover, preoccupation with national security inevitably results in lack of provision of welfare services or for structural change.

Disillusionment with the state as equalizer and liberator and stabilizer as well as other disillusionments have resulted in significant new mass movements in different part of Asia, Africa and Latin America.[19]

One notices a dialectical drama here. As the participation of the State in the lives of ordinary people has increased, ordinary people who do not benefit from and are often harmed by the State - working with progressive intellectuals - organize themselves to do things for themselves and, when necessary, to counter state power. We find this beginning in India in 1964-65 in the wake of the Bihar famine and in 1970's in the people's movement spearheaded by Jayaparakash Narayan. KSSP spearheads a people's movement in a similar vein.

What is KSSP's view of and relationship with the Indian State?

The official motto of KSSP - "Science for Social Revolution" - indicates that it sees itself mainly as a force that will oppose the state and the elites when their policies result in underdevelopment and immiserisation. KSSP spearheads a mass movement that claims that the participation of ordinary people in the formulation and implementation of state policies is essential for the success of policies for economic growth and redistribution of foods and services.

One may read into KSSP's work its perspective on the State. It is naive and futile to believe that the State qua State will be a benevolent

enabler and liberator. An enlightened and aroused public is essential to reign in the State's propensity: (a) to ever increasingly intrude into civil society; and (2) to ignore the poor and the powerless to cater to the rich and the powerful. In other words, the State will give serious attention to the goals of popular participation and fair distribution only if ordinary people continuously insist on it. Pressure from the masses on the elites, KSSP believes, can help move progressive legislation and policies from pious statements of intention or even manipulative smokescreens to real programs for the benefit of ordinary citizens. This position incidentally, is compatible with Marxist eschatology about the state eventually withering away.

KSSP is a voluntary, non-governmental organization. However, unlike most such organizations in India, it does not see its main task as relief work or social service although it does some of it. It is primarily interested in using the media of meetings and publications to harness the transformative potential of education. It attempts to push the limits of legitimate confrontation in India's democratic polity to hasten the day when significant changes in law, policy and practice that benefit the poor people will dawn. As I see it, KSSP has one short-term and one long-term goal. The short-term goal is to ensure that the agenda of public discourse includes items that the government may wish to omit, avoid, sidestep or deny. An example would be KSSP's 1986 proposal that the Government of Kerala stop planting Eucalyptus trees as part of its reforestration program (because they harm the soil) and, instead, plant fruit-bearing trees. Its long-term goal is to add its strength to oppositional forces struggling against government apathy and injustice,

thereby accentuating the legitimation crisis for the currently organized state.

Yet, KSSP works with the state in a number of areas. It often invites carefully selected representatives of the government to inaugurate or participate in its public meetings and other "mass contact" programs. It cooperates with departments of education at the state and federal levels to provide, for instance, in-service programs for teachers. It accepts invitations from governments or seeks opportunities to submit briefs on science, technology and development policies. KSSP occasionally seeks or accepts research and development grants from government agencies for programs it deems legitimate.[20] KSSP ignores the widely accepted view that the heavy hand of the state can deaden individual initiative and entrepreneurial activity if one views the state rather narrowly but largely correctly of self-seeking bureaucrats at every level. It is known to provide advice and support for the state government when the Left Democratic Front (LDF), dominated by CPI(M), is in power. However, KSSP is scrupulous in maintaining its financial independence. It pays for all its own organizational work with proceeds from the sale of its publications supplemented by membership fees and donations collected on the spot at certain types of meetings and marches. KSSP's main income is from the publication of their books. Their books sell very well. The unit, the region, and the district share 25, 5, and 10 per cent of the proceeds. 60 per cent goes to the production centre because it pays for all the production and mailing costs. KSSP produces its books cheaply. It does not, under any circumstance, accept donations from foreign sources.

Nevertheless, KSSP has been severely criticized by CPI(ML) groups for its uneasy truce and arms-length relationships with governments. CPI(ML) groups see any relationship with the state as evidence of betraying the revolutionary cause.

Thus, distrust on their left flank creates for KSSP serious problems in addition to the opposition it constantly faces from rightwing and reactionary forces.

KSSP'S STANCE: A BRIEF ANALYSIS

The greatest asset of KSSP, in my view, is that active participants in the movement are self-motivated, self-energizing volunteers. They, by themselves, cannot bring about significant social change but they can be important catalysts. Let us recall the relevant definition of catalyst: an agent that provokes or precipitates an action or reaction between two or more persons or forces without essentially altering the agent's own nature.

How do the best among KSSP's active volunteers promote catalysis?

Apathy and cynicism is a pervasive feature of current Kerala society. Most of KSSP's active volunteers have regular government or other jobs; they work for KSSP in addition to their job. They provide role models for others. By their commitment of time and energy they show that one need not be a narrow-minded careerist: that one can derive satisfaction in life by sincere involvement in society's problems even under extremely frustrating working and other conditions.

KSSP's work with schools and other institutions is neither random nor diffuse. It arises out of its ideological stance. Rather than

abandon these institutions to conservative and reactionary forces, KSSP uses the insights of conflict theory that workers in institutions do not necessarily have the same interests as the elites who direct them. KSSP thus wants to fully utilize the limited possibilities in these institutions to radicalize ordinary people and to prepare them for an eventual revolution, i.e., for a drastic, sudden replacement of those in power with another set of persons who have fundamentally different ideas and visions for new social arrangements.

For the short term, KSSP's objectives are modest. Its strategy is to sharpen the contradictions of institutional practices today; to heighten the systemic discontinuity by bringing in, where and when possible, ideas and practices implicitly and explicitly that counter the existing system. Participants believe that as an oppositional force, they are preparing the ground for what John Krige calls "discontinuous transition".[21] Since India is a democracy, there is some political space within it for KSSP to work for such transition.

When KSSP's volunteers choose to work for improvement in the lives of people, they select poor and powerless people and schools where the children of such people attend. For example, they choose not to work in schools where the language of instruction is English because such schools cater mainly to the middle and upper classes.[22] They do almost all their work in Malayalam, thus actively opposing the "snob-value" of speaking and writing in English. Such work raises the credibility of KSSP among ordinary folk, in the same way hospitals, orphanages and welfare centres for dispossessed women heightened the credibility of Christian missionaries in an earlier era. Like those

Christian missionaries, KSSP also hopes to find new recruits for the movement through their carefully selected good works.

KSSP's informal but very real relationship with a political party - namely, CPI(M) - is its way of indicating that it "means business" when proclaiming the goal of a social revolution. Several persons I interviewed suggested that KSSP had become a "mere front" for CPI(M). My view is that such a conclusion is too simple and reductionist. There is a dialectical relationship between KSSP and CPI(M); on several occasions, each has apparently influenced the other to modify its original position. There have also been tensions between them.

However, there is a view that radical messages transmitted through institutions such as the school, the church or a political party tend to become diluted and distorted: that the message will not result in effective action. A corollary view holds that major institutions (which are conservative by definition) are extremely adept in co-opting radical challenges. Will KSSP's efforts meet this fate? I don't know; I hope not.

KSSP's spokespersons often refer to it as a movement. They are, in one important respect, wrong. KSSP has become, over 25 years, an institution that spearheads a movement. Institutions are, let us recall, generally predictable and patterned ways of doing things. When a movement becomes institutionalized it has a tendency to practice goal-displacement: to maintain itself even at the cost of working for the original goals. I noticed some tendencies toward institutionalization in KSSP during my one-year stay in Kerala. (For example, no one other than certified delegates were allowed to even observe the KSSP

annual business meeting in the City of Quilon in February 1987.) How that tendency will affect its future, I cannot tell.

KSSP itself is very aware of the extreme difficulties it faces. It has met with resounding success and disheartening failure in its efforts. Let me just mention three major failures relating to formal education in addition to the severe dilemmas I have already mentioned: its attempts to promote science forums in colleges under its auspices have not met with success; its hopes to begin a children's book club had to be shelved indefinitely; KSSP's plans to promote "children's science" in villages has also so far remained a merely attractive idea.

Nevertheless, KSSP is a remarkable voluntary organization which is doing excellent work in conscientizing people. It is, by its mode of operation, setting an example to people in Kerala and elsewhere about creatively mobilizing people to solve society's problems. It faces some limits in spreading its message and recruiting and keeping new volunteers because of its ideological stance. I chose to characterize these limits as presenting dilemmas for the organization. Despite these dilemmas, KSSP is to be commended for crafting a new, indigenous model for mass education and action in India.

LESSONS FROM KSSP'S EXPERIENCE

The preceding sections of this paper emphasized KSSP's dilemmas and problems.[23] We must not, however, lost sight of the fact that these dilemmas and problems are those of a vitally vibrant, mostly successful, organization. Therefore, I should like to conclude by mentioning the lessons one can learn from the successes KSSP has

achieved in conscientizing people and mobilizing them for personal and social action. One is reminded here of Paulo Freire's assertion that genuinely new ideas for social reconstruction will come from the Third World, defined not geographically but politically.

Let us begin by mentioning certain contextual factors, eight of which were mentioned earlier as hypotheses to explain Kerala's level of development. Take, for instance, the high literacy in Kerala. This literacy makes it possible for KSSP to produce materials which people can read. Secondly, KSSP is a movement that appeals to working and many middle people because of its emphasis on development for the people. There have been many social uplift movements in Kerala of which KSSP is a recent one. Third, KSSP uses Kerala's well developed infra-structure: telephone lines linking most of the state, very good connections to the interior by roads, a very efficient and widespread postal system etc.; all these assist the organization to work well. Whenever I was in the KSSP office, the only telephone there was constantly being used. These contextual factors, however, do not only explain why KSSP has succeeded; they explain only why it was possible for KSSP to succeed. So let us go further.

There is a general view that science is good for society. KSSP which attempts to promote the scientific temperament is working in a climate where people believe that science can benefit people. The other factor is: in their life experiences, people notice that economic development is taking place but ordinary people are not benefitting from it. This is especially true in Kerala which is one of the poorer states in India. Here is an organization which says that ordinary people can benefit if we use science in new and creative ways. A movement can

succeed if it motivates people to do something for themselves as well as others. KSSP encourages people to contribute to social change in a concrete way. In KSSP, there is a clearly recognized top leadership, an intermediate leadership and followers. In most organizations we find that the leaders are very distant from the followers. But, in KSSP, the leadership is functional; otherwise they are all treated as equals. They all sleep in the same hall when they have overnight meetings. They go to the same well or bathroom to bathe. The leaders do not go to 5-star hotels and the followers to meagre accommodations as often happens with other organizations. Another element is that many people in the top leadership positions already have secure jobs. KSSP is their avocation. As soon as their regular job is over, they rush to KSSP offices to do the hundreds of mundane but essential activities that keep it going. It is an organization where people are involved, but not for narrow personal profit. Whether in day to day administration or when they perform street-plays, their expenses are kept to a minimum.

What lessons can we learn from KSSP's experience?

1. A movement that challenges the status quo must ensure that it has a sufficient, self-reliant financial base in order to successfully resist unwelcome lobbying, all blackmail and other threats.
2. The leaders of the organizations that spearhead the movement must be primarily interested in promoting its objectives and not in using the movement to raise their own social status or improve their financial position. Such sincerity, moreover, must be readily apparent in matters such as personal lifestyle to the rank-and-file members of the movement.

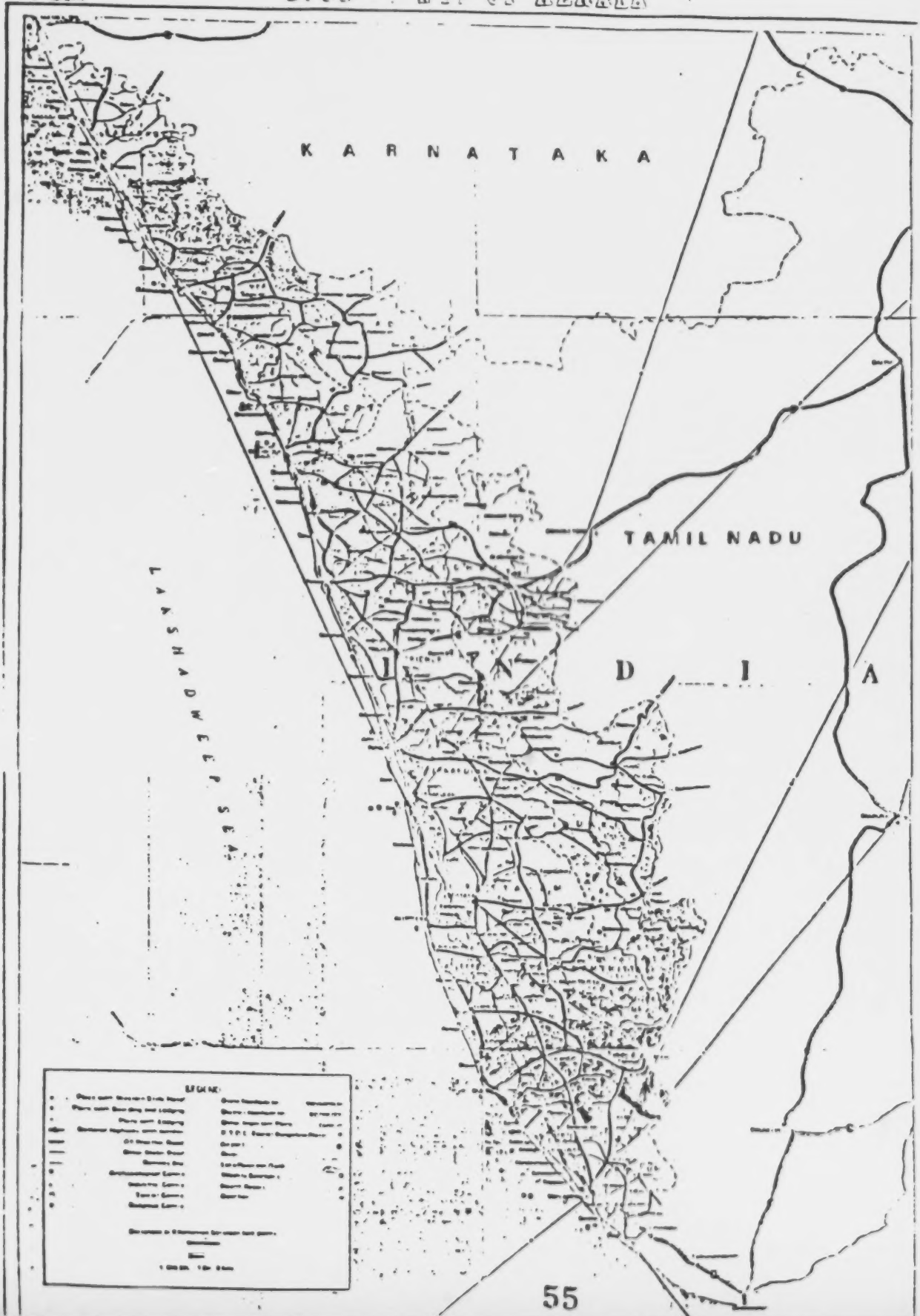
3. To ensure some impact, the active volunteer workers in the movement must be sufficiently large to achieve "critical mass" status.
4. They must be willing to devote a considerable portion of their non-renumerated work time to the progress of the movement. The fact that there are practically no financial rewards will mean that the movement will not "catch fire" but it will also mean that selfish, egotistical people will not be attracted to it as would "flies to a honeypot", a prominent KSSP leader said to me.
5. The organizational work of the movement and its offices must be as spartan as possible to save costs and to make poor people feel at home in the organization.
6. It is important to selectively cultivate influential persons sympathetic to the movement in government, the arts, the sciences, the technological units and entertainment fields. An efficient organization can also use the expertise of individuals in these groups or fields to advance its cause.
7. It is not difficult for the powerful forces of the status quo to isolate and demoralize a movement for significant social change. To counter this possibility, an organization must align itself (openly or secretly as circumstances warrant) with similar organizations or even with political parties sympathetic to it.
8. The arts - music, drama (including street theatre), poetry, effective posters - must be pressed into service to spread the message of the organization.

One wishes KSSP well and hope that this movement will resist some incipient tendencies already evident in it toward considerable

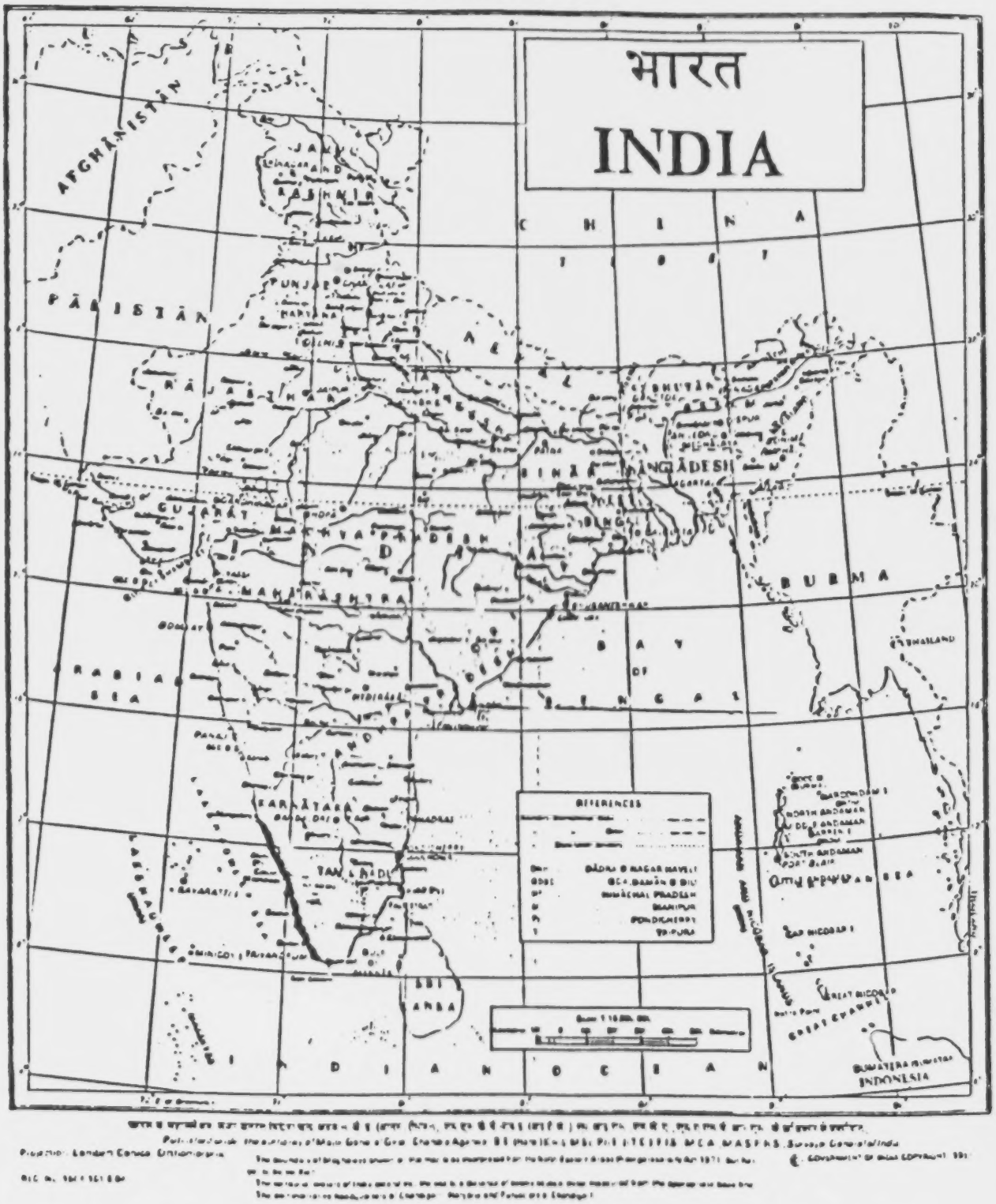
institutionalization; that their leaders do not succumb to the ever present temptation to become corrupt; that their original major goals do not become displaced by institution maintenance goals; that they do not become mere "fronts" for political parties, that they encourage women to become active participants in their work, that their leaders genuinely listen to the ordinary people who toil in the units... and so on.

People's movements have the potential to overcome dogmatic ideologies, whether they be of Marxian, Gandhian or Adam Smithian origin. Let us hope that KSSP and other people's movements will live up to that potential of working toward an undefined better future.

TOURIST MAP OF KERALA



KERALA IN INDIA



Source: INDIA 1985: A Reference Annual. New Delhi: Publications Division, Government of India, 1985.

NOTES

[1]See Oliver, Dennis Trickling Up: A Strategy for Development Where People at the Bottom Matter Most. Suva (Fiji): Lotu Pacifica, 1983.

[2]See also Parameswan, M.P. "KSSP: Movement For A Mass Education." Trivandrum: KSSP, 1987 (Mimeo).

[3]Theodorson, George A. and Achilles, G., A Modern Dictionary of Sociology (London, Methuen, 1970) p. 390.

[4]See Selbourne, David, ed. In Theory and Practice: Essays on the Politics of Jayaprakash Narayan (Delhi: Oxford, 1985), for J.P.'s notion of people's power and people's movements.

[5]The definition of development adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1986 is that it is "a comprehensive economic, educational, social, cultural and political process, which aims at the constant improvement of the well-being of the entire population and of all individuals on the basis of their active, free and meaningful participation in society and in the fair distribution of benefits resulting there from."

[6]Economic Review 1986 (Trivandrum: Kerala State Planning Board), p. 8.

[7]"Post offices in all but two villages in Kerala," The Hindu (Madras edition), August 30, 1986, p. 12.

[8]Economic Review, p. 46.

[9]Jeffrey, Robin, "Culture of Daily Newspapers in India: How It's Grown, What It Means," Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. XXII, No. 14 (April 4, 1987) p. 607.

[10]Economic Review, 1986, p. 85.

[11]Indian Express (Cochin edition), May 12, 1987, p. 3.

[12]Economic Survey, 1986, p. 86.

[13]Kannan, K.P. Towards a People's Science Movement. Trivandrum: KSSP, 1979.

[14]Kumar, Krishna. "'People's Science' and Development Theory," Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. XIX, No. 28 (July 14, 1984), p. 1082.

[15]See Saltman, Paul, "A Critique of Pure Science" in Torgny Segerstedt, ed. Ethics for Science Policy: Report from a Nobel Symposium, published for the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, Oxford: Pergamon, 1979.

[16]Parameswaran, M.P. Op cit, p. 28.

[17]See also Pequegnat, Harold, "Alpha Time," Bridges (Toronto) Vol. 4, No. 3 (March, 1987), pp.26-29.

[18]Kothari, Rajni, "Masses, Classes and the State," Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. XXI, No. 5 (February 1, 1986), p. 212.

[19]Marx-Neef, Manfred, "Another Development Under Repressive Rule: Development Dialogue, 1985, pp. 30-55.

[20]See Zachariah, Mathew. "KSSP's Improved Chulha [cooking stove] Programme," People's Action, Vol. I, No. 4 (July 1987), pp. 35-36. Published by Council for Advancement of People's Action and Rural Technology (CAPART), New Delhi, India.

[21]See Krige, John, Science, Revolution and Discontinuity (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1980), p. 80.

[22]See Zachariah, Mathew. "People's Movements and Educational Reform." Delhi: Department of Education (Central Institute of Education), University of Delhi, 1987, p. 19.

[23]For further discussion of such dilemmas, see Zachariah, Mathew, Revolution Through Reform: A Comparison of Sarvodaya and Conscientization. New York: Praeger, 1986. Also republished by Vistaar, New Delhi (a division of Sage) in 1988 for sale in India.